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Central Intelligence Agency

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25 July 1986

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MEMORANDUM FOR: April Glaspie
Director, Office of Lebanon, Jordan, Syrian Affairs
Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs
Department of State

FROM: [redacted] 25X1
Chief, Geography Division
Office of Global Issues

SUBJECT: Jordan-Israel Border Controversy [redacted] 25X1

1. The attached report reviews Israeli activities on the Jordanian side of the Armistice Demarcation Line in the Arava Valley. It includes a map showing the area occupied by Israel and three satellite photographs illustrating Israeli land use. The research and analysis for the text and graphics were done by [redacted] the Near East Branch. Comments and questions are welcome [redacted] 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1

[redacted]

[redacted]

Attachment:
Jordan-Israel Border: Israeli Occupation of Jordanian Territory in the Arava Valley [redacted] 25X1
GI M 86-20174, July 1986

[redacted] 25X1

[redacted] 25X1

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SUBJECT: Jordan-Israel Border Controversy [redacted] 25X1

OGI/GD/NE [redacted] **(July 1986)** 25X1

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25 July 1986

Jordan-Israel Border: Israeli Occupation of Jordanian Territory In the Arava Valley

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Summary

Controversy relating to the Armistice Demarcation Line (ADL) between Israel and Jordan south of the Dead Sea has been revived by United States' plans to build a Voice of America (VOA) relay transmitter in Israel's Arava Valley. Although the VOA site is entirely within Israel, Jordan is sensitive about Israeli activities in this area because Israel occupies about 350 square kilometers of Jordanian territory in the Arava Valley (map). Most of this land has probably been under Israeli control since the early 1950s when Jordan lodged the first of several complaints to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).

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Most Israeli activities across the ADL are within areas that both sides agree are Jordanian territory; in only a few places is the alignment of the Line in dispute. There has been little change in the size of these occupied territories since 1975, although the amount of land used for agriculture and water wells has expanded significantly. Water from these wells probably supplies some Israeli settlements and irrigates some of the 4,100 hectares of Israeli farmland in the Arava Valley, including most of the 1,260 hectares that lie east of the Line. The Israeli-controlled land east of the ADL also functions as a security buffer zone and contains a patrol road and fence along its entire length. The tenor of the disagreements over the ADL in the Arava Valley has been restrained and no serious armed confrontation has occurred. As Amman expands its development program in the Valley, Israeli occupation of Jordanian territory and use of scarce water resources in the area are likely to constrain Jordanian plans and further increase tension between the two countries.

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This memorandum was prepared Geography Division, Office of Global Issues. Information available as of 21 July 1986 was used in this report. Comments and questions are welcome

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The Armistice Demarcation Line

The Israel-Jordan Armistice Demarcation Line (ADL) was established with the signing of the General Armistice Agreement at Rhodes on 3 April 1949. The Agreement stated that the ADL between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba, through the Arava Valley, was to follow existing military positions as surveyed in March 1949 by United Nations observers. The map included in the Agreement depicted the ADL superimposed on a pre-1948 Survey of Palestine map at a scale of 1:250,000. The ADL in the Arava Valley followed the original international boundary separating the Palestine and Transjordan Mandates--although the original boundary was not mentioned in the General Armistice Agreement. Before 1949, the original boundary had been demarcated in only one place, a short stretch at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba (1946).

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Current large scale (1:100,000) Israeli topographic maps generally agree with the Armistice Demarcation Line as depicted on the map accompanying the 1949 Agreement, with two exceptions--one in the salt pan and agricultural area immediately south of the Dead Sea, and the other opposite the Israeli moshav of Paran where the Israeli map actually shows the Line west of the ADL. The Israeli maps accurately portray Israeli roads and other facilities on the Israeli side of the ADL, but do not show similar Israeli activities on the Jordanian side east of the Line.

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Border Disputes

Disputes relating to the Armistice Demarcation Line since 1949 have focused both on its alignment and on Israeli activities across the Line in areas where the location of the ADL is not an issue. 25X1

Wadi Arava Road. This dispute, between 1950 and 1954, involved Jordanian protests that Israeli construction of 4.7 kilometers of the Arava Valley road (at that time, a dirt track) crossed the ADL into Jordan mid-way between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba. According to Amman, the road's maximum penetration was about 500 meters into Jordanian territory. The controversy centered on the method used to determine the alignment of the ADL. Jordan proposed that the ADL should be determined by locating the deepest part of the Wadi Arava in the area, whereas Israel insisted that the ADL should be determined by laying out the line marked on the Armistice Agreement map on the ground. UNTSO agreed with the Israeli position, and the ADL in this area was finally surveyed and marked in 1954. By then, however, the object of the dispute had disappeared; the Israelis had constructed their new road to Elat farther to the west. This is one of two small parts of the ADL that have been demarcated. 25X1

Salt Pans. After festering for more than five years, another dispute broke open in 1961 over the location of the Armistice Demarcation Line in the salt pan area immediately south of the Dead Sea. Jordan accused Israel of extending its salt pans east of the ADL. In a reversal of positions taken in the earlier dispute, Amman maintained that the Line should be determined by demarcating on the ground the line drawn on the map accompanying the 1949 General Armistice Agreement which, it argued, showed the ADL drawn down the middle of the flat plain at the end of the Dead Sea. Israel, on the other hand, claimed that the line could only be determined after first locating the deepest points in the Wadi Arava, which it contended were actually up to 600 meters east of the salt pans. 25X1

A US Congen Jerusalem officer supported the Jordanian position by stating that the ADL followed the original international boundary between Palestine and Transjordan. According to the Congen, the original boundary was drawn down the middle of the flat plain from the mid-point of the southern end of the Dead Sea to the Wadi Arava further south. A UNTSO survey conducted on the Jordanian side of the salt pans in the company of Jordanian observers showed that the Israeli salt pans extended some 800-900 meters across the line, encompassing an area of about 300 hectares. UNTSO called on Israel to discontinue use of these salt pans, but Israel never complied, claiming the survey was illegal. 25X1

The boundary problem in this area came up again in 1982. Jordan complained that Israel had constructed an earthen dam across the Wadi Arava, 1.5 kilometers east of the Armistice Demarcation Line, in Jordanian territory (photo 3). This structure, described by an Israeli official as a flood protection dam, actually has diverted the course of the Wadi Arava to the east (into Jordan) allowing additional land to be brought under Israeli cultivation. 25X1

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Jordanian Road. In 1975, Jordan again raised the issue of Israeli intrusions into Jordanian territory in the Arava Valley, claiming Israeli activities interfered with the course of a new road Jordan was constructing from the Dead Sea to Aqaba. Jordanian officials complained that, in addition to occupying land in the path of the new road, Israel had drilled wells, erected buildings, farmed land, strung fencing, and built a security road in an area east of the ADL up to 7.5 kilometers wide and some 80 kilometers long in the central area of the Valley. The Israelis subsequently withdrew their fence westward just far enough to allow the Jordanian road to be completed in early 1978 (photo 1). [redacted] 25X1

VOA Transmitter Site. In mid-1985, the United States asked the Israeli Government for permission to construct a Voice of America relay transmitter in the northern Arava Valley. Jordanian concerns over the site selection were aroused when the subject was displayed prominently in the Israeli media during late 1985. One Jordanian complaint centered on the possibility that the site might have been located on land that is Israeli-occupied Jordanian territory. Our analysis of the original proposed site shows that it lay west of the Armistice Demarcation Line and was wholly within Israeli territory. After site analysis by United States Information Agency (USIA) engineers, the USIA requested that the transmitter site be shifted about 6 kilometers to the west because of the difficult terrain in the original site (map), a decision that apparently eased Jordanian concerns. [redacted] 25X1

Other Disputes. Two other minor disputes have involved both onshore and offshore areas at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. The United Nations unwittingly created the first in 1949 when the General Armistice Agreement was signed. The United Nations drew the Armistice Demarcation Line according to outdated Mandate maps following the mostly-undemarcated boundary between Palestine and Transjordan; the United Nations was apparently unaware that a 4 kilometer stretch of the boundary immediately north of the Gulf had been demarcated in 1946. As a result, Jordan received a wedge-shaped area (map) between the actual demarcated boundary and the ADL on which both Jordan and Israel had agreed in 1949. In practice, however, Israel continued to occupy the area up to the 1946 line. Thus far, Jordan has not officially made a claim to the 1949 line, although some Jordanian maps show the area as in dispute. [redacted] 25X1

The second dispute occurred in 1979 when Jordan complained that the Israelis had placed three buoys in Jordanian territorial waters where the ADL enters the Gulf of Aqaba. The lack of subsequent reporting on this offshore line suggests that the two sides have found some sort of accommodation in the area. [redacted] 25X1

Outlook

Based on the trend of Israeli activities in the Valley since 1975, we expect that Israel will continue to sink wells as needed and to expand its agricultural use of the land it controls east of the Armistice Demarcation Line. Similarly, based on past behavior, Israel probably will continue to take a low key approach to disputes along this boundary. Any increased tension along the border will most likely be caused by Jordanian frustration over Israeli use of limited Jordanian water resources in the area, or by an isolated terrorist attack on the highly visible Israeli facilities in the Valley. [redacted] 25X1

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Tel Aviv's long range intentions for the Jordanian land it occupies in the Arava Valley are not clear. Israel's policy of not constructing residences in the occupied area or changing its maps to show a claim to the territory may indicate it is willing to withdraw to the ADL in the event of a peace treaty or other agreement with Jordan. Alternatively, Tel Aviv's policy may be to put off making an official claim to the area for as long as possible. By not forcing the issue, they lengthen the duration of their control and occupation of the territory, thus strengthening any future claim. [redacted] 25X1

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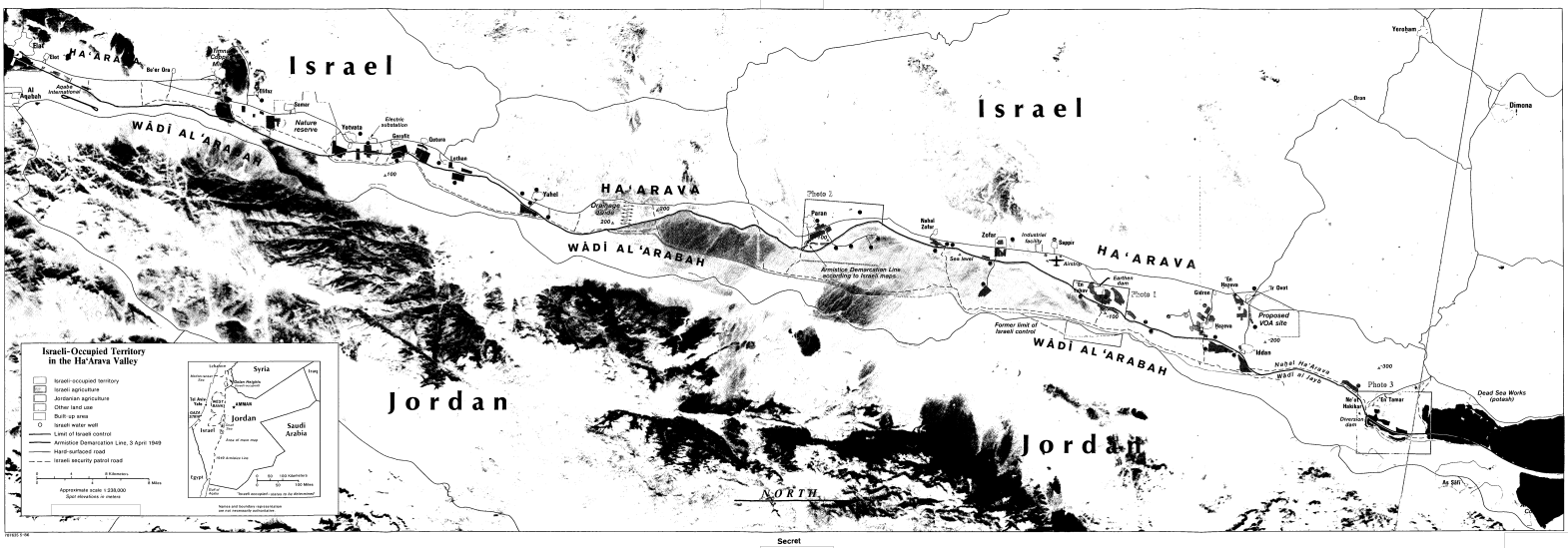

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